

Ezra Stetson Post
G.A.R.



Memorial Day
1907

O SOLDIERS WE OF A YOUNGER GENER-
ATION SALUTE YOU—

YOUR COMRADESHIP IS INCOMPARABLE ;

YOU WILL NEVER BE TOO OLD NOR TOO
FEW FOR THAT;

WE GREET YOU WITH ABUNDANT
FRIENDSHIP.

Memorial Day 1907.

Address
OF
Porter H. Dale.

Waterbury Center,
Vermont.

A. E. BISHOP, PRINTER, ISLAND POND

*Members of Stetson Post; The Relief Corps;
Ladies and Gentlemen:*

WE ARE MET to recall events on which rests the hope of the Republic. It is a privilege to do this with you veterans who took part in the fierce struggle, and have lived to enjoy the long reign of peace that has followed it; and it is a pleasure for me to meet you in this way, not only because you have survived that critical stage in our history, but also because you include many old time friends, and compose Stetson Post, the first body of soldiers I ever addressed. It is fifteen years since that Sunday service in this place, and eleven years since the Memorial Day address here. Therefore, I am as one come home, after long absence, to meet once more you who remain of those with whom I first reviewed the war.

Thinking of those years stirs emotions among the deepest, and I am constrained to depart a moment from the specific theme of the day in reverent recollection of those who were of the youth and maturity and old age that made up the trustful, generous, loyal friendships of that time. The school with its fine pure young lives; the society with its devoted men and women coming out to more than a hundred public services; the place with experiences the most sacred for me that can ever touch the soul—all these thoughts beyond expression come back to us. Then over all the rest there comes to the spiritual self the memory of those whom, out of the years that intervene, you and I have lost a while, and among the sweetest blossoms we bring today, for them,

“There’s rosemary, that’s for remembrance.”

This day, veterans, which revives your eventful past, belongs not to any one general or statesman, but to all the soldiers en masse; whose bravery was kindred, and whose leaders but expressed an excellence common to the ranks. In civic affairs it is the All Souls’ Day of the church.

Last autumn, on the day appointed for religious veneration of all who toiled to lift a little

higher the plane of human life, and died uncanonized, Dr. Hale, Chaplain of our National Senate, spoke in Boston. With the clear logic and broad sympathy of his sublime age he glorified the devotion of all great souls whose names are not printed in any book nor carved upon any shaft, but who were faithful in the hard and common warfare of existence. As I came out across the Common and through the State House grounds, where monuments and statues are continually in sight, never had stone and bronze looked so cheap; and I realized with convincing force that the lines of the venerable man who had just spoken told better than these chiseled eulogies, who saved the Republic.

"What was his name? I do not know his name.
I only know he heard God's voice and came.
No blaring trumpet sounded out his fame;
He lived, he died. I do not know his name."

This is the spirit of Memorial Day. If he was a soldier, that is enough. I do not ask his name.

You were a part of one of two forces that marched to a climax in warfare. They were the most highly civilized armies that ever clashed in

such terrible conflict. Nothing like it can occur again—it was the climax. From this distance the glory of it is first and everywhere apparent. Vermont is proud of the valor of her regiments during that great struggle. We think of them with admiration as they went down the Peninsular, through its defeats and victories, and into the flood and fire of Lees Mills. Their glorious courage is evident as they toiled through malarial swamps, and under the scorching sun, to Fair Oaks; as through seven days they fought and seven nights they marched, from Mechanicsville to Malvern Hill; as in the awful carnage of Antietam, after four times the historic cornfield had been won and lost, they swept and held it; and at Fredericksburg, to which the Vermont troops went again and again and again, and where on that May morning they wrested from the Confederate forces and their great commander, the heights above the city. Of this heroic charge Gen. McMahon said years afterwards: “While the morning dew was yet fresh upon the grass of that pretty slope the blood of one thousand gallant men was mingled with it. There were hearts in many homes that day, some some of them among the Green Mountains, that

were ready to break as they wearily waited for news from the front. Yet the war went on, and the twenty thousand gallant men who swept that crest, less the one thousand left bleeding on its slope, went forward under John Sedgwick." Well might Gen. McMahon refer to the Green Mountain Boys who went forward under John Sedgwick; for only a few weeks after Fredericksburg he sent them to their supreme test, when Gen. Sedgwick gave this same Gen. McMahon the historic command at Gettysburg: "Put the Vermonters ahead and keep the lines well closed up." Ah, what recollections must rush in upon the veteran who was there, at the mention of Gettysburg! And what memories must come to many on our green hillsides as they recall those four days during which fifty thousand hearts, out of the North and South, ceased to beat! What a fearful commemoration of our liberty was that July fourth, eighteen hundred sixty-three! Vermont's distinguished soldier and scholar for whom will be twined this year for the first time the Memorial wreath, Gen. G. G. Benedict, has said: "The battle maps of Gettysburg prepared by the War Department have ended disputes as to the more important

movements and locations of that battle. That of the third day shows upon the flank of Pickett's column, and farther to the front than any other Union force, a Vermont brigade. Southern and Northern historians alike have made it plain that if any one movement on the Union side can be called the decisive movement of the decisive day, and so the turning point of the battle, and so of the war, it was the charge of Stannard's brigade."

He has an heroic spirit who meets a great task cheerfully, and often it is glorious in the midst of danger to be humorous. Someone has related an incident that illustrates this element in the Vermont soldier. Some colored troops had joined the Federal army and, wholly inexperienced, they were being drilled, while the white veterans in the service, with pick and shovel, were throwing up intrenchments. It was a hot, dusty day, and a stalwart Vermonter leaned on his shovel and wiped the perspiration from his brow as the black troops in new uniforms marched gaily by. Solemnly removing his hat, he bowed low with great dignity, as he said: "Good morning gentlemen. You must find this work exceedingly fatiguing?"

On the nineteenth of September, Nineteen hundred four, I sat at lunch with an old friend * in a Boston hotel, and mentioning that he appeared somewhat abstracted, he said: "Yes, I'm thinking of a time about which you realize but little. Just forty years ago today at Opequon Creek, they shot off my arm." And then he told me of the Tenth Vermont, the Wilderness—the day in which a thousand Vermonters fell, and its night of seeking for the wounded as the enemy fired at every light and noise—of Spottsylvania, the Bloody Angle, the most pathetic death of Gen. Sedgwick, and so on to the close of the war. We talked of some of the men who led the Vermont troops; of the stalwart old Col. Phelps, who went out with the First Regiment, and as they passed through New York City attracted universal attention, and someone asking who he was received the reply: "That's old Ethan Allen resurrected." We talked of Gen. Howard, still honored by all his country, who at Bull Run already had the confidence of his men so that they stood cool and steady and retired only at his command; of Generals Stannard and Peck at Gettysburg; and finally of

* Col. Z. M. Mansur.

**Who won the affection
of all who knew him.**



one whom I knew in his old age at Montpelier, one who won the affection of all who knew him, whose fatherly care saved many a soldier's life, who led the Eighth Vermont at Vicksburg, who at Cedar Creek said: "Boys, can you pray? This is a time to fight and pray, especially to fight." There have lived but few men of the genuine character expressed through the long, active, kindly life of Gen. Stephen Thomas.

But while we are stirred by the splendor of events and the nobility of character through the war, we must not forget its fearful cost—from the North, approximately, fifty thousand killed in battle, an equal number dying of wounds, over twice the sum of these two of disease, and as many as all who died discharged for disability. This cold computation in figures hardly indicates the price, and the human mind cannot estimate or imagine the loss to this nation, out of the North and South alike, of all this vital manhood, the selected soldiery of the highest civilization of the world. All this splendid ambition and integrity and moral force, and what it might have accomplished, swept away forever. Oh, this is the pity of it that we can never measure nor understand!

Veterans, you were a part of forces that reached the extreme of suffering on the field after battle, in the hospital, and in the prison. Theories and conditions among all the nations of the earth have so changed since then as to make the recurrence of anything like it impossible. The deepest impressions of this part of your experiences have come to me from the conversation and writings of Walt Whitman, whose memoranda of the war are doubtless the most realistic in existence, and near whom it was my great privilege to live for about two years. He had a fine unusual sympathy for his fellow-men, and it pleased him to say: "Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have cross'd and rested."

You reached the extreme of suffering on the field after battle. At Fredericksburg, Whitman writes: "A soldier among the crowded cots, badly hit. He lay two days and nights on the field between the city and those grim terraces of batteries. To make matters worse he lay with his head slightly down hill, and could not help himself. At the end of some fifty hours he was brought off with other wounded, under a flag of truce. It is not uncommon for men to remain on the field this

way, one, two, or even four or five days." You who were there realize the truth of this description, and you also know that the methods of hastening relief, and the rules of warfare that prohibit impeding it, have made such after battle scenes as were yours forever impossible of repetition.

You reached the extreme of suffering in the hospitals. The government did its best, but the wounded were many and there was absolutely no efficient organization. While Whitman recognizes the heroism of many a nurse and surgeon, he says: "There were serious deficiencies, wastes, sad want of system. Of all harrowing experiences none greater than that of the days following a heavy battle. Scores, hundreds of the noblest men on earth, uncomplaining, lie helpless, mangled, faint, alone, and so bleed to death, or die from exhaustion, either actually untouched at all, or merely the laying of them down and leaving them, where there ought to be means provided to save them." You who beheld far worse conditions than these, which could not be surmounted by the most generous spirit and tender sympathy, understand that now there is preparation and organization

throughout the world by which emergencies are quickly met, and you have no fear that anything like what you suffered in this respect can ever take place again.

Surely you reached the extreme of suffering in the prisons. One night, twenty years ago, I came into Salisbury, North Carolina, and walked over to the site of its prison, and to the twelve thousand nameless graves. Sitting there in the warm moonlight I recalled much that Whitman had said of this place, Belle Isle, Andersonville and others, that would not do to repeat here—perhaps never again anywhere. As the few who were finally released were coming North, he wrote: "The sight is worse than any sight of battlefield or the bloodiest wounded. Probably no more appalling sight was ever seen on this earth. They represent all the horrors that can be named—starvation, lassitude, despair, insanity." Just this glimpse for one who was there is enough. You know that nothing like it will ever again be allowed on earth. That experience in history cannot repeat itself.

Walt Whitman during the war possessed the perfection of physical health, but the quick strain

and long vigil, to a man of his temperament, were fatal to that, and he was ever after an invalid. Oh, that the soldiers might better have known the great soul of this man! While dressing wounds he says:

“One turns to me his appealing eyes—poor boy!

I never knew you,

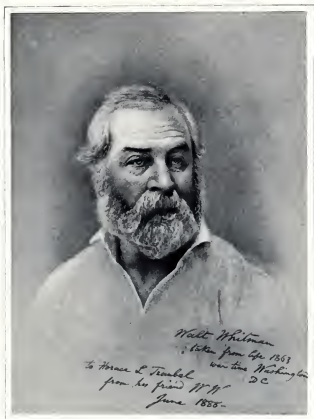
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment

to die for you, if that would save you.”

And again, while in the wards:

“I have come to adapt myself to each emergency, however trivial, however solemn, every one justified and made real under its circumstances—not only visits and cheering talk and little gifts—not only washing and dressing wounds, but passages from the Bible, prayer at the bedside—I think I see my friends smiling at this confession, but I was never more in earnest in my life.” Under the appalling conditions he did all he could and gave all he had, for the soldiers, and today the survivors of that time should give one loving thought to the memory of Walt Whitman.

**" Many a soldier's loving
arms about this neck
have cross'd and rested."**



THE "GARDNER" PORTRAIT OF WALT WHITMAN

Doubtless there is little reason for speaking of this dark side of your warfare other than to express our appreciation of what you endured, and to contrast with it the better conditions that have developed since that time.

The chief influence in bringing about this change has been the work of a world wide organization composed of the Societies of the Red Cross. This movement was started in Geneva, Switzerland, when the Civil War in America was drawing to its close. Its object was to get all the civilized nations of the world pledged by international treaty to eliminate from warfare needless cruelties, and to render exempt from attack or capture all disabled soldiers, and the persons working for their relief. More than forty nations have now entered into this treaty, but our government was slow in adopting it, and did so after five years of persistent effort by a woman—one whose sacrifices and loyalty were well known all through your war—one whose effort has been so identical with the work of this great society, that wherever the symbol of the red cross on the white field is seen it suggests the name, Clara Barton.

When the first blood of the war was shed in

the city of Baltimore, Clara Barton met the train bringing the wounded to Washington, and thenceforward gave all her energy to the work of relief. Through the hot summer of the Peninsular campaign she went day after day to check what suffering she might as the boats came up the Potomac from the battlefields, till the Quartermaster allowed her to take her supplies to the front. We find her with the first to reach Cedar Mountain and Second Bull Run; and at Antietam the fierce battle raged so close about her that a fallen soldier was killed by a shot that passed under her arm extended to help him. She went on with the army through the winter's cold, sheltered only by an old tent, on into the heat of another summer, and down to the scorching sands of Morris Island, cooking food, dressing wounds and staying disease; still on through the Wilderness campaign and to the close, distributing contributions that came to her from countless sources, and spending what she had saved from her salary as teacher and government clerk—all this without any commission from the government, and directed by no authority save the impulse of her dauntless spirit. Then immediately at the close of the war she or-

ganized the Bureau of Records of Missing Men, by which she endeavored to trace for grief stricken relatives, some information about the soldiers who were numbered among the unknown; and as one result of this bureau nearly all the thirteen thousand graves at Andersonville were found and marked.

You cannot wonder that her physical strength at last failed and she was compelled to go abroad for rest. Of this she says: "I had grown to love the country we had toiled so for, and did not want to leave it. Its very woes made it dear to me. It had its quiet once more, its peace, its early soldiers' homes, its fast filling cemeteries and the tender memories of a martyred president resting over it. These had come like a heritage to me and in my weakness I cling to them." This gentle, heroic woman did not realize that her exile was to be her preparation for a work that would bring more relief and prevent more suffering in that country whose very woes had endeared it to her, than its people can ever measure or appreciate.

Clara Barton went to Geneva, Switzerland, though she had never heard of the Red Cross, and a committee from the International Society came

to her for conference. Within a few months war was declared between France and Prussia, and the royal woman who had left her homeland seeking rest, was with the wounded on a foreign field of war.

As she watched the operations of the Red Cross, sending its nurses directly to any field to care for the fallen, and its agents immediately to soldier and prisoner alike, she writes: "I thought of the Peninsular, of Pittsburg Landing, Cedar Mountain and Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg with its acres of snow and its fourth day flag of truce. I remembered our prisons, crowded with starving men whom all the powers and pities of the world could not reach even with a bit of bread—I thought of the widows weeds still fresh and dark through all the land North and South. I saw the work of the Red Cross societies in the field, accomplishing in four months under that systematic organization what we failed to accomplish in four years without it—no mistakes, no needless suffering, no starving, no lack of care, no waste, no confusion, but order, plenty, cleanliness and comfort wherever that little flag made its way. You will not wonder that I said: If ever I live to return to my country I will try to make

my people understand the Red Cross and that treaty."

In eighteen hundred seventy-three Clara Barton returned to America, wrecked in health. She says: "There followed years of suffering in which I forgot how to walk, but I remembered my promise."

Our time is too brief to review the splendid persistency by which she rose above this condition and carried out her purpose. It is one of the most remarkable pieces of biography. As we think of what this woman has accomplished by independent endeavor, the pain she has checked, the gloom she has dispelled, the hearts she has cheered, through more than twenty years as president of the American Red Cross, in times of fire and flood and cyclone and drought and pestilence in this country; when we try to think of this, and then of her work in Cuba which led your comrade, Senator Proctor, to say that while he had known and esteemed her for many years, he had not half appreciated her capability and devotion; when we try to think of all this after the vast amount of good she did elsewhere and long before, —we do not wonder that she is called the most

universally beloved woman now living.

I saw a picture years ago in which so much of hope was gathered by the artist's brush that all the ills of life were filled with inspiration; I heard the music of a cornet once, beside the sea, and all the sorrow that the world had ever known seemed touched with faith as the great musician played "Sweet Spirit Hear My Prayer"; but long afterward I beheld a woman's face that moved me more than these. The wrath of conflict, the agonizing peace of dying soldiers, the curses and the prayers of vanquished men, the cries of broken-hearted women and the moans of starving babes, and all the elements of desolation, have traced such lines upon that face as no mortal artist ever drew, and filled it with emotions no music could incite. Oh the power of the expression of the face of Clara Barton! And not alone of hers, but of other faces that have taught you and me full well there is in womankind a majestic courage

"That springs forth from the brow of pain, full-grown,

Minerva-like, and dares all dangers known,
And all the threatening future yet may bring."

May 6. 1904-

My dear Mr Dale:

May the veterans of the old war live long to enjoy the
country their valor saved.

Most cordially yours

Blora Barton



1 We are far enough from the great war to view it in the light that brings out the only recompense for the woe and desolation of warfare—its permanent good results.

As you who survive that conflict have beheld the mighty Empire of Russia tottering under a policy despised by its people; as you have watched the waning prestige of Spain, with the loss of its colonies; as you think of the provinces conquered by the greatest general of France, all gone, without a single established result from that devastation; as you contrast with these conditions the strength and contentment of your own country and its citizens, you must be touched with heroic pride that you fought for a just cause, and in your old age, rejoice that you helped make possible what the world has not yet known—the greatest numbers and the highest civilization united in one Republic. This possibility has been established because of an innate devotion in the people strong enough to reconstruct the desolated land. A spirit nearest the divine ever known in warfare, lifted the great souled men, on both sides, above the conflict, with its individual bitterness, and made the good results immortal. There was nothing more

heroic in the war than the spirit of both armies at Appomatox. Perhaps you have heard the ex-Confederate general who did more than any other man from the South to bring peace and friendship back to the Union, describe the scene. Anyone who perceived the fine, strong, noble character of the man, must have had an abiding affection for Gen. John B. Gordon. He said in part: "As we reached the designated point, the arms were stacked and the battle-flags were folded. Those sad and suffering men, many of them weeping as they saw the old banners laid upon the stacked guns like trap-pings on the coffin of their dead hopes, at once gathered in compact mass around me. Sitting on my horse in the midst of them, I spoke to them for the last time as their commander. I said to them that through the rifts in the clouds then above us I could see the hand of Almighty God stretched out to help us in the impending battle with adversity. I urged them to enter cheerfully and hopefully upon the tasks imposed by the fortunes of war, obeying the laws, and giving, as I knew they would, the same loyal support to the general Government which they had yielded to the Confederacy. I closed with a prophecy that passion would

speedily die, and that the brave and magnanimous soldiers of the Union army, when disbanded and scattered among the people, would become promoters of sectional peace and prosperity."

I am glad that this brave, generous man, who toiled so faithfully for reconciliation, lived to see the spirit of reunion so strong within our national government that it could safely and freely return to the vanquished their flags which he saw folded at Appomatox. May a sentiment prevail among those who take them similar to that expressed by their poet.

"Aye, bring the flags, the tattered and shot torn,
The rent and faded banners that were borne
By hands now dust, and cheered by lips now dead,
Flung high o'er ramparts rent with shot, and red
With blood of brave, brave men of North and South.
They will be treasured, kissed with pain-drooped mouth;
There is no North today, nor any South.
Abreast they march where unwon heights still gleam;
But let us have the flags, mementoes of a dream."

Ay, let us send back the flags that sometimes waved above you, that often fell before you, and think only of the one banner,

"Delicate cluster! flag of teeming life!
Covering all my lands—all my seashores lining!"

Among the men the spirit of whose great souls influenced the affairs of this nation through the period of its reconstruction, we in the North think first and always of our martyred President—Abraham Lincoln. Last winter at the state capitol in Albany, New York, I was shown one of Lincoln's pardons, all written out by his hand, and you may imagine my emotion while looking down upon it and thinking of his big hand as it traced out the dictation of his great, tender heart to save that boy from being shot. It is said that his hand was as wonderful as his face. Some of you may know, for you may have held it in your own. William Dean Howells relates an incident of deepest pathos that occurred long after it had vanished from mortal touch. "One evening in the library of James Lorimer Graham something tragical happened. Edwin Booth was of our number, a gentle, rather silent person in company, who as his fate would, went up to the cast of a huge hand that lay upon one of the shelves. 'Whose hand is this Lorry?' he asked our host, as he took it up and turned it over in both his own hands. Graham feigned not to hear and Booth asked again, 'Whose hand is this?' Then there was nothing for Graham but

to say, 'It's Lincoln's hand,' and the man for whom it meant such unspeakable things put it softly down without a word." Oh, what unspeakable things that hand has meant to many! To the mother at whose request it penned the pardon of her boy, to the race for whom it signed the proclamation of its liberty, to the country that in her perilous voyage through unknown seas knew it was at the helm. No wonder that as the great ship of state came into port and this hand was stricken from the wheel, the lament of all the people inspired Walt Whitman's great poem.

O Captain! My Captain, our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought
is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and
daring.

But O heart, heart, heart,
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain, My Captain, rise up and hear the bells,
Rise up, for you the flag is flung, for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribboned wreaths, for you the
shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces
turning.

Here Captain, Dear Father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen, cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My Father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse, nor will,
The ship is anchored safe and sound, its voyage closed
and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won.

Exult O shores, and ring O bells ;
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

There was another whom we recall today, and who lived through the reconstruction. You know his achievements in the Mississippi Valley; in Virginia, leading his army on through the Wilderness, Spottsylvania and Cold Harbor; fighting it out on the same line, never wavering, till at last forcing his way to Petersburg and across the mountain to Appomatox, where, swordless, and without military pomp, or victor's haughty mien, he accepted the surrender of the Confederate cause. All this and much more, you know of General Grant, but what impresses us today and ought to outlive the rest, is the sublime spirit of reconciliation that he carried into the after years. His pur-

pose during the awful sacrifices of the Wilderness to end the war, was no firmer than his determination against President Johnson and a vindictive element of the North, that the generous terms of the surrender should be kept absolutely inviolate, that there might come quickly and forever out of the war a lasting peace. It was this attribute of his character that came out chiefly in the design and construction of the Memorial Tomb of your great commander. On the day of its dedication I rode within the shadow of that splendid structure, and as I realized for a moment that approaching and departing through that immense throng moved more than fifty thousand of my country's soldiers, and beheld, gay with pennant and banner, the warships of five great nations as they maneuvered on the historic waters below, the grandeur of this unparalleled military pageant in a day of profound peace, came upon me with overwhelming force, and I thought when the North and South strike hands in this event, it is indeed an assurance of the answer to that Christian invocation uttered on Mount McGregor by the voice now silent: "Let us have peace."

Veterans, do not ever get the impression that your work is finished. One little squad of soldiers on such an occasion as this teaches these children a loyalty and devotion they could not learn from volumes of history. Your work is not finished. Live as long and as joyously as you can. We shall not forget you, but we shall miss you when you are gone.

While Gen. Gordon was going through the North proclaiming peace, just a few weeks before they sounded the last bugle call for him in the Southland, I saw him take leave of a company of Union veterans, and as he passed down the silent aisle his bearing expressed the physical depression of age and fatigue. A woman, touched with sympathy, placed in his, her hand, and said: "General Gordon, you are doing a great work." "I feel that I am called to proclaim the gospel of peace," he replied, "and I believe that is next to the gospel of Jesus Christ." And she answered him: "It is the gospel of Jesus Christ." Then that ex-Confederate General went out with an old Union Veteran—the two arm in arm together.

"General Gordon, you are doing a great work."

"I feel that I am called to proclaim the gospel of peace, and I believe that is next to the gospel of Jesus Christ."

"It is the gospel of Jesus Christ."



Let me leave this with you now, as a symbol, in conclusion. As we behold you passing down the silent aisles toward the dawn of eternal light, the war with its advances and retreats, its hospitals and prisons, all ended, may this be the most glorious sight, the most beautiful, the nearest divine—all bitterness gone—the gospel of peace proclaiming the eternal results of your last victory.

ADIEU O SOLDIER,
YOU OF THE RUDE CAMPAIGNING, (WHICH
WE SHARED),
THE RAPID MARCH, THE LIFE OF THE CAMP,
WITH WAR AND WAR'S EXPRESSION—
ADIEU DEAR COMRADE.

WALT WHITMAN.